



## This response was prepared for Merry Hunter Hipp, Education Policy Advisor for Georgia Governor Nathan Deal

### Your Question:

Generally, you were looking for research and resources on school leadership. Specifically, you were interested in research on effective leadership preparation programs/academies for principals and assistant principals.

### Our Response:

In our research review, we found that principal preparation programs require some key supports and features to be effective and that states have access to several policy levers that can positively impact principal preparation. These include revising/modernizing principal program accreditation and licensure requirements and providing more funding to better support clinical experiences and residencies.

Our response is broken into two parts. First, we provide a summary of the research on the role of principals in advancing student success. We then provide 50-state information and summaries of recent research on effective principal preparation programs and clinical experiences, academies or residencies. Toolkits to assist states in their research and reform efforts are highlighted on page one, and ESSA-related research and reports are highlighted on page four.

### The Role of Principals

Attracting and retaining good teachers who make measurable impacts on student success is largely dependent school leadership quality. This can be problematic when, nationally, new principal attrition rates [hover at 25 percent](#) per year. Summaries of the research on the role of principals in advancing student success are provided below:

- [How Leadership Influences Student Learning](#) (The Wallace Foundation, 2004) This landmark study discusses the important role of leadership for student success. Among other things, the report finds that, according to research:
  - Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.
  - Leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most.
  - Mostly leaders contribute to student learning indirectly, through their influence on other people or features of their organization.

## Toolkits

[SEP3 Toolkit: State Evaluation of Principal Preparation Programs](#) (New Leaders and UCEA, 2016) This online resource provides publications, tools and resources designed to support states in the development and implementation of a high-quality evaluation system for educational leadership preparation.

[A Policymaker's Guide to Improving School Leadership](#) (CRPE, 2016) This online resource is designed to help policymakers and advocates focus on what makes a great principal—and how to get more of them in the schools that need them most. It includes ideas for states to develop strategies to strengthen leadership, as well as model legislation drafted by experts in the field.

[Elevating School Leadership in ESSA Plans](#) (CCSSO, 2016) This online resource provides evidence and guidance to help states and districts leverage school leadership under ESSA.

Out of the fifty states and D.C., thirty met one or more of the researchers' six criteria for a "*clinically rich internship*" and 21 states did not meet any of the criteria. (See p. 22 of the report for additional information.)

- [American Institutes for Research](#), 2015 (Original report could not be retrieved.) Using the same database reviewed by UCEA, AIR researchers also examined policies available to states to improve principal preparation programs. Among other things, AIR found that *only 14 states require at least 300 hours of field-based experiences*. The report suggests that states could play a more assertive role in improving clinical training by making provision of rich internship experiences a program accreditation requirement. AIR researchers found emerging consensus on seven characteristics of high quality preparation programs:
  - **program alignment with research-based standards;**
  - **rigorous selection** using authentic assessments;
  - **induction support** (such as mentoring/coaching);
  - **experiential learning** (*coursework and clinical*);
  - **cohorts for learning** (students progress through the course sequence together as a group, sharing experiences and learning);
  - **district-university partnerships;** and
  - **evidence of effects/use of data for program improvement.**

See [this recent blog post](#) for an update from AIR on "high leverage" state-level policies that can improve principal preparation.

- [Improving University Principal Preparation Programs](#) (The Wallace Foundation, 2016) The report synthesizes the findings from four expert reports prepared for Wallace, including the UCEA and AIR reports highlighted above. Among other things, researchers found that the **lack of financial and budgetary support for qualified instructors (faculty) and for clinical experiences** remains the top barrier for university implementation of effective clinical experiences.
- For an evaluation of state principal licensure requirements for the early grades, see: [What do we Know About Principal Preparation, Licensure Requirements, and Professional Development for School Leaders](#) (CEELO, 2014)

### Recent Research and State Policy Recommendations

The research below is broken into two parts. First, we provide a snapshot of recent research related to principal preparation more generally. Second we provide a snapshot of recent research specifically related to *clinical experiences*, academies or residencies. State policy recommendations are included throughout.

General research, with some mention of *clinical experience*:

- [The Role of Principals in Addressing Teacher Shortages](#) (Learning Policy Institute, 2017) This report examines the impact of principals on teacher turnover and, on the topic of principal preparation and professional development, recommends that states:
  - Encourage the widespread development of high-quality principal preparation programs through **program accreditation or state licensing standards**. High-quality programs should include, among other things: *problem-based learning, field-based internships, and coaching/mentoring*.
  - Offer grant funding and technical assistance for **competitive service scholarship programs** for principal preparation to attract exemplary candidates to the field and allow them to participate in internships with expert.
  - Consider **providing funding** for principals to receive preparation and professional development.
- [Perspective: Building Principal Pipelines](#) (Wallace Foundation, 2016) This report summarizes district solutions to building strong leadership pipelines, but also notes that while "the primary responsibility for

The authors provide eight features of quality principal preparation programs including “offering well-designed and supervised *internships or school-based residencies* that provide real opportunities for aspiring principals to experience leadership firsthand.” State policy examples are provided.

See [here](#) for NCSL’s collection of research and reports on this topic.

- [\*\*School Leadership: Improving State Systems for Leader Development\*\*](#) (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2011) This guide provides an opportunity for board members to engage in a policy discussion around various issues related to school leadership, including principal training.
- [\*\*Expanding Effective Practices in Teaching and Leadership\*\*](#) (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2010) This report discusses the core tasks and challenges of scaling effective practices in teaching and leadership.

Research specific to *clinical experiences*, academies or residencies

- [\*\*Promising Practices in Boosting School Leadership Capacity: Principal Academies\*\*](#) (National Governors Association, 2016) This report defines principal academies as independent, state-run entities that deliver high-quality, *clinically based professional development* for “aspiring and sitting principals.” NGA describes support of these academies as a “high-impact policy lever” that can be used by governors to improve principal preparation and training. State examples are provided throughout the report.
- [\*\*Ready to Lead: Designing Residencies for Better Principal Preparation\*\*](#) (NYC Leadership Academy and American Institutes for Research, 2016) This “framework for principal residency” can be used as a guide for designing and improving principal preparation. The authors examine the current research on *principal residencies* and guide state policymakers in making decisions about allocating funding to principal preparation improvements. To *support residencies*, they recommend:
  - State education agencies change funding allocation processes to spur residency program development through partnership, invest in longitudinal data systems that follow candidates through their careers in education leadership and administration, and adjust administrative rules on principal certification to better support residency.
  - State policymakers reconsider principal certification requirements and modernize principal preparation and certification standards; provide funding for candidates to complete paid, extended residencies in schools; heighten preparation program accountability or mentor principal requirements; or allocate funding to study the impact of new, innovative principal residency initiatives.
- [\*\*Redesigning Principal Preparation: A Work in Progress at the University of Missouri St. Louis\*\*](#) (New Leaders and UMSL, 2016) Examines a new approach to principal training at the University of Missouri St. Louis, which included a year-long paid school residency. The case study is intended to help other colleges of education and their partners consider both the opportunities and challenges of embracing improvements to principal preparation.